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Author

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Book

A
SERIES
OF
LETTERS
ON
FREE MASONRY.

BY A
LADY OF BOSTON.



BOSTON :
PRINTED BY JOHN ELIOT.
1815.

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TO the protection and patronage of
the M. W. Past Grand Master, the Past
Grand Chaplain, and the present Officers
and Members of the Grand Lodge of Mas-
sachusetts, this little work is now humbly
dedicated, by the author, with the most ar-
dent wish of benevolence, that every wor-
thy member may square his conduct by the
line of integrity.

P. Americana.

PREFACE.

HAVING been indulged with the perusal of the following Letters, I was so pleased with their ingenuity, and so gratified with the candour and liberality of sentiment which pervades them, that I solicited the consent of the writer to a publication of them. The Brethren of the Fraternity are obliged to her for the permission, and will feel highly honoured by the opinion of one, who, superiour to all jealousy on account of the exclusion of her sex, and all prejudice from any other source, has so fairly estimated, so freely allowed, and so happily stated the merits of Free Masonry; while readers in general will find here additional reasons for approving an Institution which has met with such an advocate.

T. M. HARRIS.

July 7, 1815.

LETTERS, &c.

Boston, Sept. 7, 1810.

MY FRIEND,

YOU often solicit my opinion on the subject of Masonry. From what motive you can wish for the ideas of a lady on such a topic I cannot fathom, and must leave it in your own breast to solve. I am ready, however, to express my sentiments. As a prelude to the subject, I send you a few extracts I made from MAURICE'S Indian Antiquities, taken by him from M. BASNAGE. He says, "the perfections of God are the pillars which support the Universe; *Mercy* illumines *Justice*, and *Beauty* decorates *Strength*." The old Jewish rabbis did believe the three *Sephiroths*, or Splendors, to shine with intrinsic lustre. [Comment; from whence perhaps may originate the ancient masonic light and knowledge which few Masons of the present day know much about.] "The names of the Sephiroth, are GEDULAR, *Strength* or *Severity*; GEBUTAH, *Mercy* or *Magnificence*; THIPHERATH, *Beauty*; NERSAH, *Victory* or *eternity*; HOD, *glory*, JEHOD, the *foundation*; MELCUTH, the *kingdom*." This is the order in which they are arranged on an engraving in the old works of M. BASNAGE, which

I have seen. The Circle, being the most perfect of figures, denotes the perfection of Deity and its attributes. Now my friend it is clear in my mind, from every circumstance, that the Jewish rabbis did believe in a trinity of some kind. I cannot say what their ideas were respecting the trinity; but thus much I will venture to say, it is plain from many ancient records I have seen, that they invented triangles, and were the first that introduced the rule of three, in arithmetick.

The Jews were a very cunning, artful people, and 'tis plain from some of the rabbinical writings that the rabbis did meet in consultation and formed a plan or lodge, long before their dispersion; and gave each other certain signs and tokens. This was of great advantage to them after their dispersion, when scattered among strangers and in different parts of the world. They found it necessary for the safety of their property to establish funds in different places of resort, and thus when they wanted money they would give some respectable person an order on their treasurer, who, as their property was in his hands would answer the order, or bill on sight; and by that means they held good credit in many parts of the globe. And it was this plan that first gave rise to drawing bills of exchange; by which mode a great part of our business is now transacted, and the buying, selling, and transferring bills of exchange has become a very large branch in the broker's line. I think, you'll say, "this is not answering my question. I solicited your opinion respecting the Masonic institution." My friend, you might with the same propriety have asked my ideas respecting the Mosaick dispensation.

I suppose, indeed, that you knew, in the younger part of life, I did investigate some of the principles of Masonry; not from any wish of prying into hidden mysteries, but from motives of benevolence, if possible, to quiet the minds of several of my female friends, who were very anxious, on account of their husbands joining a lodge, lest it should injure their moral and religious sentiments; and as the hour of their retiring to rest was much later than usual, and infringed on domestick quiet and happiness.

For my own part, I ever respected the Brotherhood, as a society formed for the most benevolent purposes of charity, and friendship; and, from an ardent wish to promote the quiet and happiness of a friend, I was first influenced to examine some of the rules and regulations of the society.

To my great joy I soon restored peace of mind to my anxious friends; and satisfied them respecting the value of the Institution, if supported on the original plan.

I have no doubt the principles are good, the Corner Stone well laid, and ought to be supported by WISDOM, STRENGTH, and JUSTICE. If they conducted with prudence, they might diffuse that universal benevolence, which would promote "peace on earth and good will to men." The original principles are said to be a compound of WISDOM, STRENGTH and BEAUTY. There is, however, some reason to fear, that many young Masons, grasp the shadow only.

A good Mason ought to be a good man. He ought to be three times more circumspect in his life and conversation, than those who have never

taken the same oath. He ought to be thrice three times more vigilant than those who have never bent the knee within due Square ; having bound himself by the most solemn vow. He having obtained more light, ought to impart knowledge to those who are yet blind and ignorant ; and by a virtuous life do honour to the profession.

I had the honour some years ago to preside as MISTRESS of a *similar institution*, consisting of females only ; we held a regular lodge, founded on the original principles of true ancient masonry, so far as was consistent for the female character. We recognized the BROTHERHOOD as preeminent, as may be seen from several Addresses and Songs that were printed in the Centinel, and other papers. One or two of them gave umbrage to a few would-be-thought Masons ; but by the most respectable part of them we were treated like SISTERS. The prime inducement for forming the lodge, was a desire for cultivating the mind in the most useful branches of science, and cherishing a love of literature ; for at that period, female education was at a very low ebb. If women could even read and badly write their name it was thought enough for *them*, who by some were esteemed as only "mere domestick animals."

But the aspiring female mind, could no longer bear a cramp to genius. They roused to thought, and clearly saw they were given by the wise author of nature, as not only helps-meet, but associates and friends, not slaves to man. I have reason to think this institution gave the first rise to female education in this town, and our sex a rel-

ish for improving the mind ; as a few even then, dared to study the languages under the auspices and patronage of the benevolent Dr. M. He was good, learned, and a great scholar. His easy manners, pleasing address, and the calm serenity of mind which he possessed, in a very eminent degree, made instruction pleasant and gratifying ; and under his directing eye and patronage, we agreed to unite as a society. Our sole aim was friendship, and the improving the mind ; that by *Strength*, and *Wisdom*, we might *beautifully* adorn the female character, and shew to the Brethren that we had obtained the grand secret, of securing the affections of our best friends by performing every domestick duty with ease and harmony. We had our *tokens*, *signs*, and *word* ; and within *due Square* we marked our lives by the parallel line of integrity. Most of the old members of the lodge, are now, I trust, gone to join the Grand Lodge above in the realms of bliss and happiness. I hope to see a revival of this, or a similar institution, on the same principles, for cultivation of the mind, and acts of charity and benevolence. There are a number of societies now formed by ladies for beneficent purposes ; and many poor children are instructed under their patronage. I pray heaven may reward the good undertaking with a blessing !— Surely, then, it is to be wished that some respectable ladies would join in a society, and by their presence and patronage promote SCIENCE and LITERATURE. I think many hours might be redeemed that are now spent in frivolous calls, or trifling with some foolish novel to craze the brain, or contaminate the heart.

If the society introduce history, let it be read and explained. The history of our own country first. Make youth early acquainted with the virtues of their ancestors, as an incitement to the love of virtue. Then let such other works be read and lectured upon as will tend to enlarge the mind, refine the taste, and perfect them in all female accomplishments.

I think I hear you say, "this letter is rather a little essay on female education, than your ideas of Masonry." I own I have rather begged the question, but will now give you my opinion of Masonry, as far as may be consistent for a lady to give, on a subject we are indeed debarred from investigating. I suppose, indeed, that it will be thought by many, a bold attempt for a female to even dare enter on the subject at all; but a truly independent mind will rise above the fear of man. I will then venture to say so much as this—I think the foundation good, the chief corner stone is laid with WISDOM, STRENGTH, and BEAUTY, and ought to be adorned with *honour, truth, and justice, and universal benevolence*. The principles, well improved, might lead the mind to the most sublime contemplations of the great architecture of the universe. It is however, to be feared, that the members, like those of many other institutions, have deviated from their original plan, and many errors have crept into the system: so it is also to be feared that the Christian system is greatly adulterated by many corrupt members that never practise the right principles.

Let me entreat you my friend, if you join a Lodge to Square your conduct by the plumb line of the ancient principles. We may *in theory* be

a Mason, Philosopher, or a Christian, but if we do not *practise* all the moral virtues, our theory will never lead us to join the Grand Lodge above, where our heavenly Master completes the source of all perfection and blessedness, and is ever ready to receive all his faithful servants to the perfect *Sanctum Sanctorum* of bliss and happiness forever. Act your part well in this life, and heaven bless and keep you, is the ardent prayer of your friend.

With sentiments of affection,

A. P. AMERICANA.

[ANSWER.]

Montpelier, Sept. 21, 1810.

DEAR MADAM,

ACCEPT my warmest thanks for your letter. With the sentiments on Masonry, I feel almost ready to exclaim as Agrippa did when forcibly struck by the energy of Paul's preaching, almost thou persuadest me to be a *Mason*, which is, or ought to be a *Christian*, agreeably to your ideas. Though I own it staggers my faith, when I see many members sally forth after the lodge is closed, in a very imprudent way. It makes me have my fears, of the effects it will have on the morals; as the influence of others, will operate on the mind of youth, very often. Now, dear madam, let me ask you this one question, "How far such an institution may tend to promote a life of dissipation?" Let me beg you to consider the question and give me your opin-

ion, so far as you think competent; and you will
add another obligation on your friend,

And humble servant,

ENQUIRER.

Boston, Sept. 30, 1810.

MY FRIEND,

I FEAR I have said more on the subject of Masonry than may be consistent for a female. But as I have really a pretty good opinion of the Institution, and a wish to oblige you, I will endeavour to take off any prejudice you may have imbibed, from the observation you make on seeing some irregular members. That appears to you rather a stumbling block. I own my sensibility is often wounded at observing the immorality, not only of many Masons, but of many members of the Christian Church. But surely *that* can be no reason for my neglecting to comply with any known duty. If any member of the same Church is irregular or immoral, it can be no reason for my quitting that Church, if I perform *my* duty. I once belonged to a literary society. I was often wounded in my feelings when I observed how few had, or paid any attention to literature, or science; yet there was enough to form a society for promoting useful knowledge and improvement, for all those, that wished to obtain it. Now I could see no good reason for my withdrawing from the society, though some of the members knew and cared very little for any thing more than to take a cheerful glass. That was not the fault of the society, but of the

individual; for the institution was a very good one, and designed to promote learning and external knowledge; and if any of the members did not make improvement the fault was their own, and not any in the institution.

It is not for us to judge the heart, as we can form just judgments only by the known life and conduct. If any one sets up all night to pray and tell his experiences, and the inward working of the spirit; now, if that same man, by noon next day wrong his friend, or prove guilty of any other immorality, I must think that person does not conduct becoming the christian character. Yet that surely can be no reason why I should restrain prayer, but ought to be an incitement to me, to pray that I may be more circumspect in my own life and conversation.

I am sensible my friend, that the imprudence of some who style themselves *Masons*, has been a stumbling block to many; but in the light I view it, any other society, might as well be productive of immorality as the masonic. The fact is, if the members would retire as soon as the lodge was closed, as many worthy members do, there would be nothing unseemly or disorderly heard or thought of. The chief danger is, from so large a number uniting in one social band of friendship. Some of your jolly souls may take the advantage of being assembled, to carry their mirth to an unreasonable degree; though I am of the opinion that some classes of men would form a circle for riot and dissipation, if no lodge had been formed. There are also some political clubs, that only meet to breed a ferment; but that surely can be no reason why the inhabitants

of a Town or State should not meet in a regular manner to transact the business of their community. The truth is this, I do not think the institution of Masonry tends more to produce immorality than any other society formed for social intercourse ; on the contrary, from the universal benevolence it extends to the Brotherhood, it has a tendency to make man, mild, and sociable to man. I think, every benevolent institution has a happy effect on society at large. The more we form circles for literary disquisition, or if only for benevolent purposes, it has a tendency to enlarge the mind and expand the heart, and by that means promotes the happiness of mankind in general. Every humane, charitable, religious, political, or literary society, if founded on a rational plan, has a tendency to promote the general utility and happiness of our fellow creatures. But every person ought to consult his own finances, and not by his benevolence infringe on his domestick happiness or comfort. Charity should begin at home, but not be retained a prisoner there. A liberal mind should devise and give, in proportion to the abundance heaven has blessed him with. We should be always ready to help the necessities of our fellow creatures. Every benevolent institution must promote the happiness of individuals in this way, by making us acquainted with the circumstances of many poor persons, that without the aid of such an institution might have continued unknown, and consequently unassisted. I must think there can be nothing immoral in joining any benevolent society. Then surely it is clear there can be no immorality, in joining the Masonic society ; for

they stand preeminent on the list, for charity and benevolence. I wish virtue and integrity may be added to the list, that if you see your way clear, to join a Lodge, you may be able to say, "it is good for me to be a Mason; as I really find it gives me a greater relish for every christian duty, and leads me more sensibly to contemplate on the benevolence and mercy of the Grand High Priest of the Christian profession, and is a new source of all hope, comfort, and happiness." May a full portion of the divine influence and grace, direct your path,

Prays most fervently your friend,

A. P. AMERICANA.

Montpelier, Oct. 9, 1810.

MADAM,

PLEASE to accept my acknowledgment and gratitude for your candid opinion on Masonry. So far as respects the morals, I now fully imbibe your sentiments; admitting, that it is not from any fault in the Institution, but of the individual who belongs to the society, that this has ever been questioned. And any other institution might with as much propriety be condemned as the Masonic, was it to be judged only from the imprudence of some irregular members. You have further convinced me that every benevolent society, formed for charitable purposes, must have a happy effect on the whole system of social order. Pardon me, madam, if I again solicit your opinion, how far you think the Masonic institution may affect, not only the moral, but religious

sentiments of the members. My question is this, "Can Masonry have any good effect on our religious sentiments, and from what source?" If you will gratify me with an answer to this question, you will add another obligation to

Your friend, and humble servant,

ENQUIRER.

Boston, Oct. 20, 1810.

MY FRIEND,

DO you still persist in soliciting my opinion of Masonry? and surely the most important part of the Institution? If we admit the principle, that the foundation is laid on the rock of ages, and that the Corner Stone is laid with WISDOM, STRENGTH, and BEAUTY, it certainly should impress the mind of every member with the most exalted ideas, of the GREAT SUPREME ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE. No one can be admitted to a lodge till he has made himself acquainted with some parts of the Old Testament, that perhaps he might never have comprehended, had it not been from an ardent wish to join a lodge. How many are there, who view with wonder and admiration, *the magnificence of Solomon's Temple*. Many who never would have thought of a *Sanctum Sanctorum*, had they not seen it engraven on the post of the door of the holy of holies, agreeable to the old Jewish superscription. This must, I think, lead them to make some enquiry respecting the Jewish nation, and why they are distinguished as God's peculiar people. The answer will be this:

they were the first nation to whom Jehovah was pleased to reveal his mind and will, and gave them commandments and laws, by his called and faithful servant Moses. Some of the Jewish rabbis boast, to this very day, that when Moses, in his anger, destroyed the first table, there was a part or second law saved, and kept by Moses; which is recorded in some of their rabbinical writings. They say it has been deposited in the inner sanctuary behind the veil, in the ark of the covenant of the first and second table; and none but the High Priest was allowed to enter there. Now this may still lead to a further investigation respecting this people; and for what purpose laws and commandments were given them; and why they are held a distinct people, though dispersed over all parts of the globe. These enquiries may tend to direct the mind to the most sublime contemplations, where there is such a display of WISDOM, STRENGTH, and BEAUTY, as is most plainly seen in the whole order of creation. And when all the attributes of divine majesty and perfection are brought to view, can man alone be mute, when all creation sings his praise? No: every rational being must acknowledge an infinitely supreme power, who in wisdom has created and sustains the universe.

I think the basis by which the pillars of Masonry are supported, may serve to strengthen the minds of men in contemplating the divine perfection and benevolence in creation; and by further searching, they may discover the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption, by his Son JESUS CHRIST, who is *the chief Corner Stone* of the Christian profession. From the very benevo-

lence of the Masonic institution, they must, they will, certainly, be induced to trace the origin of the Christian religion ; and, by a train of thought, and concatenation of ideas, from the first Jewish dispensation to the building the Temple by Solomon, with all the curious utensils, by the handicraft of their Grand Master Hiram, and with all the light and knowledge that illumines the Masonic art, trace farther the grandeur of the system. The aspiring mind of man will not rest here, but press on till it discovers the bright and shining light of the gospel, through the many types and figures of the old Jewish ceremonies. I cherish the pleasing idea, that in this point of view, it will have a happy effect on the religious sentiments of many of the members of the Masonic society.

I wish still to impress on your mind, that every benevolent institution has a tendency to spread universal good will to men, which is one of the blessings of the Christian religion. If there was no Corner Stone, and the foundation was not well laid, the fabrick must soon fall. And we know, that the Masonic institution is of very ancient date, and has stood the test of ages. That it has, cannot be doubted, any more than that the Jews have remained a distinct people even to this present day, though dispersed among all the nations of the earth. And this very people, most probably, were the first founders of the Masonic institution. Now different lodges may naturally be incited to investigate the reason, why this ancient nation are in such a deplorable state, from the coming of the Messiah to the present day ; and why they are still preserved a monument to this

truth ; namely, that they were so infatuated as to refuse the chief Corner Stone, even JESUS CHRIST himself, who was the founder of the Christian system. They must be convinced of the beauty and order, by which the Christian religion has been established. The situation of this infatuated nation, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, has kept them a living witness to the truth of the Christian religion ; for, had they not have crucified the Son of God, they might still have continued a happy nation.

The Masonic Institution may have a good effect on the members, if they will make a wise improvement of their boasted light and knowledge ; if they will contemplate the divine attributes in their order and perfection. It may have a happy effect in promoting those religious sentiments that shall effectually produce the fruit of true holiness, and a good conversation among the Brethren. Heaven grant, that true religion may spread and prevail throughout the whole world, till that happy period arrive, when all nations shall be blessed in Jesus Christ, in another and better world, and all unite in one Grand Lodge ; where, I trust, even females will be admitted to join in celebrating the praises of him who died that we might rise to bliss and happiness !

May eternal happiness be your portion.

A. P. AMERICANA.

Montpelier, Oct. 31, 1810.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR last letter has settled my mind entirely. I have enlisted my name on the re-

ords of Masonry, with a full determination to become a master workman, and hope I shall prove myself one, that shall not be ashamed. To you, madam, I feel indebted for the satisfaction I have obtained. I expect soon in person to acknowledge, with gratitude, every obligation you have conferred on your friend

And humble servant,

ENQUIRER.



Boston, 1778,

First printed in the Centinel, headed thus :

Brother RUSSELL,

The following lines were actually written by a lady of this town, who imagines she has some insight into the mysteries of the Craft, how far I will not say ; the fraternity may judge from the composition. Please insert the lines, and oblige yours,

W. S. B.

[B. William Shattuck.]

A SHORT ADDRESS.

By the Mistress of St. Ann's Lodge.

COME Ladies fair,
 Within due Square
 Let each renew her vow,
 No timid maid
 Need be afraid,
 Her Sacred Knee to bow.

Since Sheba's queen
 The first was seen,
 To gain this wondrous art ;

She made the vow
 We all do now,
 And gain'd the wise king's heart.

Let none disclose
 To secret foes,
 Our *tokens, words, or signs.*
 May BEAUTY grace
 Each lovely face,
 And WISDOM guide our minds.

May we have STRENGTH
 To join at length,
 The heavenly Lodge above,
 Brothers there meet
 Though none here greet,
 There join in mutual love,

That sacred plan,
 Held here by man,
 As far above our reach,
 Shall to each fair
 Within due Square
 Their love and duty teach.

In sacred love
 We'll join above
 The widow's son and mother,
 With one accord
 We'll join the word,
 To hail each sacred brother.

A SONG

By the Mistress of St. Ann's Lodge.

Printed in the Centinel, 1778.

COME Ladies all
 Attend the call
 Come join with one accord,
 Let each agree
 To join with me
 Keep *token, sign, and word.*

Our lodge within
 Admits no sin,
 But **WISDOM, STRENGTH, and BEAUTY**
 Adorn each fair,
 We welcome here
 All well perform their duty.

Each act their part
 With cheerful heart,
 With fervency and zeal,
 And all agree
 To join with me,
 No secret to reveal.

Our brothers rare
 Within due Square
 May try our skill in science ;
 We'll clearly prove
 To them our love,
 And on them place reliance.

But then we'll be,
 As Masons free,
 To think, and speak, and reason ;

We'll act our part
With skill and art,
And never think it treason.

No idle tale
Shall us regale,
Of widow's son, or mother ;
But each at ease
Shall strive to please
Their husband, friend, and brother.



On seeing the solemnities of the Grand Lodge in Boston, in commemoration of General WASHINGTON. By a lady, who sat in the east gallery of the Old South meeting, to view the procession and hear the Eulogy by Brother BIGLOW.

FROM north to south I chanc'd to roam,
Well seated in the sacred dome
Within due form ; I took my seat
The eastern corner to complete.

Well form'd around the sacred Square,
With wonder view'd each lovely fair.
With out stretch'd neck, and piercing eyes,
There *Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty* lies.

Here JACHIN well establish'd stand,
There BOAS strengthens every hand.
In *faith, and hope, with love* divine,
ay every faithful brother shine.

10. 10. 2. 163-164. 12.
Crocker, Hamal (Mather) 1752-182.

Hail sacred lodge, 'tis my desire,
 To tune my harp, new string my lyre
 To give due praise, could it be given,
 Till we join WASHINGTON in heaven.

Here *Strength* appears, in every youth,
 With *Beauty* shines each sacred truth ;
 Here SHEBA's queen as once of old,
 Might say, "one half has not been told."

Here every widow's heart, with joy
 Must view the lovely sleeping boy,
 Well placed upon the sacred urn ;
 Each heart with holy fire must burn.

Each hand a sprig of *cassia* bring,
 With loud applause, each valley ring !
 Accept most worshipful and true,
 The praises, that are justly due.

Oh may that sacred Arch arise,
 To realms of bliss above the skies ;
 Where you, with *token, sign, and word,*
 May join the choir, with one accord ;
 The Holy Lodge of saints above,
 In friendship pure, and fervent love !

[Printed in the Centinel.]

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